

Washington, DC – US Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), today joined other CAPAC members and Republican leadership to hail passage of legislation that provides for the preservation of the historic internment camps where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.

House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) and CAPAC member Doris Matsui (D-CA) joined Honda as original co-sponsors of HR 1492, which creates a grant program to fund public-private partnerships that will purchase and restore “historic confinement sites” so future generations can learn the lessons of the Japanese American internment.

“By preserving these sites, we show all Americans and the world that we are a nation that can deal honestly with past wrongs and show that we can learn from our mistakes,” Congressman Honda said. “This preservation program demonstrates our commitment to equal justice under the law.”

“These camps are the physical – tangible – representation of our government’s failure to protect the Constitutional right of every American.  However, they are also a symbol of this nation’s ability to recognize and acknowledge our mistakes,” stated Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui.  “For both of these reasons it is essential that the internment camps be preserved and maintained.  Through preservation of the camps, new generations of Americans will learn the lessons of this tragic period – and significantly, the lesson will not fade from our national memory.  In protecting them, we are reaffirming our belief in the Constitution and the rights and protections it guarantees for each and every American.”

“The internment was one of the darkest chapters in our country’s history.  More than 100,000 American were unjustly accused of disloyalty and incarcerated without trial solely because of their ancestry,” Congressman Neil Abercrombie (D-HI) said. “The loyalty and sacrifices of Japanese Americans in World War II provided convincing refutation of the slander, doubts and hysteria which occasioned the internment.  No action can cleanse the stain of internment completely or erase the suffering of those who endured it, but the 1988 apology and restitution bill authored by Senator Spark Matsunaga was a big stride in that direction.”

“It is right and appropriate that we provide for permanent memorials of this difficult time, when good people did bad things out of fear and ignorance,” Congressman Ed Case (D-HI) said.

“With the passage of this bill today, we acknowledge the magnitude of the injustices committed against Japanese-Americans during World War II,” Congressman David Wu (D-OR) said. “By preserving sites where Japanese-Americans were detained, we ensure that this sad episode in our history will never be forgotten, and therefore never repeated.&nbsp; Let us learn from the mistakes of our past and demonstrate our commitment to protecting the rights and freedom of all Americans, regardless of heritage.”